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NETHERLANDS NOTES

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

AN exceptional chance for a collector of Dutch antiquities now exists in the collection of Mr. H. Van Nieuwland, at present on exhibition at the Kunstmin in Dordrecht. It cost Mr. Nieuwland many years to form the collection, which represents a typical room in the dead city of Huiderloopen, which, during the period from 1650 to 1750, was a wealthy city of commerce, with argosies on every sea. The collection is complete; even to the tiled walls, floors and window casings, and to the smallest pieces of furniture and china. Mr. Nieuwland is now over seventy years of age, and owing to his advanced years he has at last decided to part with his collection, but only in its entirety. A descriptive pamphlet may be had by addressing Mr. C. C. Wittenbogard, Kunstmin, Dordrecht, Holland. It is to be hoped that one of our museums may acquire the collection, as even in Holland it would be difficult to repeat.

At the Loan Exhibition of Dutch art at Amsterdam all the best men, and they are few, found representation. It was a charmingly harmonious show, hung very much on the plan of the new Salon, in groups. The three leading men of Holland, Israels, Jacques and William Maris, were out in great force—especially J. Maris, who was particularly well represented in all except his early Düsseldorf period. Singular to say, nearly all the older Dutchmen of the present school passed through this phase. There were a couple of Dordrechts, the church and town cutting against the sky, one small and sketchy, with tremendous effect and color, quite able to hold its own against Constable, whom it reminded me of; and a larger one, more complete, very serene and dignified, and rich in low-toned browns, reds and grays. Two small canvases—an upright "Looking Through an Archway," and a small arrangement of a sand-boat passing under a foot-bridge, were gems. An interesting canvas was an earlier one of Amsterdam harbor. It was original in line and much higher in key than his later work, and still rich and deep in color. Extreme lowness of key is, perhaps, a defect in some of Maris' latest work. William Maris had a number of rather large pictures, mostly sunlight effects, which would give pain to the French Luminists from their simple, direct manner and freedom from affectation. By the by, the latest name for that coterie is Symbolists; rather a good one! William Maris is becoming freer and more vigorous in his handling. Certainly no one knows more of sunlight reflections on weeds and foliage, or has greater feeling for the class of effects he revels in. Yet, in comparison with Troyon, he occasionally feels incomplete. Only occasionally though, for such pictures as the "Boy with the Cows," are masterpieces.

After him one must speak of Matthew Maris, whose continued residence in London rather makes you forget him when you speak only of Holland. He has a large number of works here, going from his earlier period, rather hardly painted, and with abundance of detail, but always thoughtful and with a certain morbidness of sentiment that later finds its expression in those mystical "Dreams," those shadowy figures that are just vanishing, the instant between waking and sleeping, which he delights in doing now. I believe these examples come from Van Wisselingh, who is exploiting him now.

Next are the Israels, some of his latest period and some earlier. One of the best is a "Madonna," quite out of his usual vein—and there is a replica of his old woman sitting in the hearth, warming her hands—a subject he has done several times. There was one of them, I believe, in the last Seney sale. On the whole, I think Israels has been as well seen in New York as possible. But there is a group of Bosbooms, of whom you wrote in an early issue of THE COLLECTOR, and who died last year at a great age, which is simply wonderful; church interiors that are veritable landscapes, broadly and simply painted, but with air, mystery, feeling of temperature and of the very hour of the day. No one has done in this way what Bosboom has; what is usually a mere clever exploit in brushcraft, becomes in his hands a dignified thought. I believe he is not yet known in America to any extent—certainly not as his wonderful art deserves.

Mauve was not well represented. An interesting picture was an early one, a landscape study rather in the Düsseldorf manner. I remember to have seen one of his in the same style, but completer in finish and with cattle, at the Delmonico galleries in New York. A late unfinished work of his was, however, charming in its simplicity and strength. Mauve's great popularity abroad has taken most of his work out of Holland. Knoedler & Co. made a better exhibit of him last spring in their gallery than he has here in his native land. Neuhuys had a charming little thing in his latest manner, and Kever was also well represented. One end of a room enclosed in Japanese hangings held a group by J. J. Toorooops, who is a Dutch East-Indian, and in consequence of the Oriental strain in his blood revels in mysticism and color. He works in the manner of the French Luminists, and in spite of the atrocity of his color and manner he impresses you. A black and white was, perhaps, the best thing he showed. He seems to be feeling his way now, and if he succeeds in finding a style that will express him—well, something interesting may be looked for.

Reviewing the whole Exhibition one receives the impression that the best of the Dutch art of our time is passing away. Perhaps some of the younger men paint even better, but there is a lack of the impulse, of the force, of the rebound, that carried the old men away from the "pretty" school they came up in, that does not argue well for the future; but it is a great, serious school as represented by its masters—a worthy following-on of the Barbizon and what went before.

H. W. RANGER.

DORDRECHT, August 10, 1892.

REPRODUCTIONS OF OLD MASTERS

YEARS and years ago, so many that their very memory is faint like an echo, I remember a little, big-eyed chap who was learning to draw in a big art academy in a big city. I have an idea that this small person was neither half as talented nor half as diligent as he might have been. But no matter how he neglected his work he never neglected an odd little nook of one of the galleries in this great old institution, an alcove where books on art were kept locked up on shelves behind glass doors. They were rarely troubled then. Art students did not read—only too many of them do not read even now. However, he had the privilege of these volumes from a noble gentleman who was then the chief and most generous patron of the academy in question, and who often used to take him by the hand to his mansion, where his collections of books and engravings and pictures were at his command. I can see this poor little chap, as I write, delving in the treasures of this rich man's collection, and see his friend sharing with him the pleasure of study he enjoyed.

But why root up the grass of memory over a good man's grave?

This small chap, I believe, possessed the instinct of true art, for, as I remember, that which he loved to study most was the reproductions of the old masters in painting. He appeared to recognize in them the organic quality of great art—adherence to nature—but with simplification of detail, breadth of treatment, and a personal interpretation of the subject treated. At that time the masters could be studied from engravings only, which, no matter how fine their manner of execution may be, are, after all, but faint interpretations of the originals. Still, next to seeing the pictures themselves, this was, perhaps the best schooling which he enjoyed; and when he came to see many of the pictures in their original integrity he was the better able to enjoy them.

Since then, various reproductive processes have superseded the slow and laborious methods of the engraver, and the most majestic of the great art works of the past have been rendered public property by numerous avenues of mechanical duplication. Photography from the original is the basis of these methods. After this the reproduction assumes a number of variations. For a long time the Braun photographs, after the old masters, held supremacy. Now the Franz Hanfstaengl Company's photographs and carbon prints appear to put the Braun publications in the shade. This company has begun, and well advanced, the publication of a series of reproductions of the world famous old masters, made directly from the originals in the galleries of Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Cassel, Amsterdam, The Hague, Antwerp, Brussels, etc., which excel anything of the kind which has yet been offered to the public.

The reproductions in this series are printed from plates executed with the most scrupulous fidelity to the original pictures, by the carbon process, which secures not only an unalterable reproduction, but also those delicate effects of light and shade, and subtleties of tone of the paintings, which can be secured by no other process. In the works of Durer, Holbein, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Ruysdael, Teniers, Paul Potter, Rubens, and the other old masters in the galleries named, the edition will be found particularly strong. The publications may be examined at the company's gallery, in New York. Sets will be sent for selection to collectors or institutions desirous of making a choice from them, and catalogues furnished, by which orders may be filled by correspondence.

Of the educational value of these reproductions to the art student, too much cannot be said. No art academy or art school should be without a selection from them, and the selection should be as extensive as the purchaser's means allow. There should be portfolios of them in every college and high-class school in the country and every art club should provide itself with a supply. It is to be remarked, in regard to these publications of the Franz Hanfstaengl Company, that the latest discoveries in the art are utilized by them, and new discoveries add constantly to their efficiency, of which their series of old masters may be offered as a conclusive example. This series comprises a list of upwards of 600 masters, and about 2,000 of their works, of which a thousand are already completed.

The Willems-Fund in Holland is issuing a valuable collection of the Netherlands ballads, love songs, comic songs, student songs and nursery rhymes. Some of these are very old and of great interest and beauty. Two volumes have already appeared.